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ABSTRACT

This guide for educational decision-makers presents the major themes and recommendations of 27 reports published between 1985 and 1989 on the problems of at-risk students. It comprises an overview of recommendations from all the reports, abstracts of individual reports, and a 27-item bibliography. The following recommendations concerning the young child (ages 0 through 9) are outlined: (1) prenatal risk factors can be reduced by providing health care, nutritional guidance, and parenting education for pregnant adolescents; (2) birth is the optimal time to make a diagnosis of the infant's health care needs and the family's ability to meet those needs, and to respond with follow-up health care and parenting education; (3) the ability of families to meet the needs of preschool children varies and families may require day care, parent education, social service outreach, and early childhood education; and (4) the condition and support of the family are important components of children's early school success (preschool, kindergarten, and first grade), requiring high-quality school-based early childhood programs, careful monitoring of student progress, parent participation, and support services for children and families. Recommendations concerning the middle learning years (ages 10-14) are outlined for the following areas: (1) school reform or restructuring of all the elements of middle school education; (2) developmentally appropriate curricula and instruction; (3) adequate resources, facilities, and staff; (4) ongoing evaluation; (5) school-based decision making; and (6) partnerships. Recommendations for the high school years are outlined for the following: (1) administrative vision and leadership; (2) provision of special programs; and (3) revision in current schooling practice. (FMW)

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Responding to Children At Risk:

A Guide to Recent Reports

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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INTRODUCTION

The issue of students failing to graduate from high school and failing to become productive citizens has concerned policymakers for the past several years. A broad spectrum of groups in the public and private sectors has shared this concern. These groups include national associations, commissions, philanthropic foundations, advocacy groups, state departments of education, and others. These groups have studied the problem independently and have recommended various approaches for addressing it.

Their analyses and recommendations are contained in over two dozen reports published from 1985 to 1989. Most of the reports focus exclusively on at-risk youth; some deal with youth in general. Overall, the reports include recommendations for at-risk youth from the prenatal period to young adulthood. Individual reports differ as to the age span and other characteristics of youth whom they specifically target. They also difrer as to the audiences that their recommendations are meant to inform and mobilize.

Despite these differences, the reports generally agree on a number of points.

- Children at risk form a growing proportion of all cnildren. Responding to their needs has become a social imperative.
- The effort should address the comprehensive needs of children and their families.
- The effort will require a longitudinal approach emphasizing both prevention and intervention.
- The effort will require all levels of government and the private sector to exercise vision and leadership.
- The effort will require adequate resources, whether these are reallocated from existing sources or drawn from new sources.
- Schools, families, and communities share responsibility for responding to the needs of children at risk.
- Schools must assume new roles in the delivery and coordination of services to at-risk youngsters.
- Schools must change in order to meet the needs of at-risk youth.

This document serves as a guide to the major themes and recommendations of 27 reports on the problem of at-risk youth. The guide consists of an **overview** of recommendations from all the reports, abstracts of individual reports, and a **bibliography**.

The overview presents recommendations in three sections, according to the age of children whose needs are considered. The section on the early learning years extends from the prenatal period to the upper elementary grades or about age 9. The section on the middle learning years covers approximately ages 10 to 14. The section on the high school learning years ranges approximately from ages 14 to 24. Each section includes a handy key to the relevant reports.

The abstracts indicate the target youth population, summarize the overall thrust of the report, and list key recommendations for each report. As much as possible, the abstracts incorporate the exact terminology used in the individual reports.

The bibliography lists the 27 reports in alphabetical order by author. As noted above, the overview also lists the reports, but groups them according to the age of youngsters targeted.

This guide was originally compiled for the Maryland Commission On Students At Risk. This commission was convened in 1988 by the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools and charged with recommending how the state should respond to the problem of at-risk youngsters. The commission's activities have been supported by funds from the Council of Chief State School Officers' project for state and local action to ensure education success for children and youth at risk, and matching funds from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). MSDE staffed the commission with the assistance of Research for Better Schools, Inc.

The guide has now been expanded to serve a wider audience. It is designed to give educational decisionmakers access to the best current thinking on this significant national issue.

The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance of Elana Yaron in preparing early drafts of various abstracts.

OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for the Early Learning Years

Recommendations of the individual early learning years reports reflect the primary interests of the various sponsoring groups. These include the economic consequences of the problem, the responsibilities of the state, or the developmental needs of the young child. However, there is one common theme expressed in varying ways in each: the importance of intervening early in children's lives in order to prepare and support them for school success and for productive citizenship when they leave school. The kinds of interventions recommended by these reports suggest a growing national consensus on how to meet the needs of young children at risk.

The following recommendations concerning the young child are presented as they relate to each of the significant time periods in a young child's life (0 to 9 years): prenatal, at birth, before school, and in school.

Prenatal

Discussions about young children at risk frequently include an understanding that the prenatal health and well being of the mother of the child can contribute to a child's at-risk status. A mother's poor health can contribute to anemia and toxicity in the mother and low birth weight, premature births and related problems (e.g., physical handicaps, neurological problems) in the child. Recommendations include:

Health: provide prenatal and postnatal health care and nutritional guidance for pregnant teens and other high risk mothers (6, 8, 24)

Education: expand educational services, including parenting education, to pregnant teens (6, 8, 24).

At Birth

Birth provides the optimum moment for diagnosis of the infant's health needs as well as the family's capability to meet the needs of their baby. The health community is in the best position to assess the needs of children and their families, and to set in motion the necessary follow through on proposed interventions. The educational community is in a position to help at-risk families acquire essential parenting skills. Recommendations of the reports include:

Health: provide follow-up health care and developmental screening for infants of teens and other high risk mothers (6, 8, 24)

Education: provide parenting education both for mothers and fathers, family health care, and nutritional guidance (6, 8, 24, 26).

Before School

From infancy until entering school, the family assumes the primary responsibility for meeting the physical, emotional, social and cognitive needs of the young child. The child's growth and development is closely related to how well a family's basic needs are met: food, shelter, health care, employment, child care. The ability of families to meet their children's needs vary, and they may require various types of assistance. Recommendations from the reports on young children include:

Day care: provide day care for mothers in school, preferably on site (8); expand quality child care services for poor working parents that stress social development and school readiness (6, 8, 20); assure standards of quality for day care programs (6, 18, 20, 24); stress continued improvement of developmentally appropriate programs in day care centers (26).

Parent education: expand parenting education opportunities for families of young children (6, 10, 13))

Outreach: develop outreach initiatives in expanding health and social services to young children and their families (6, 8, 24); mobilize support systems on behalf of disadvantaged families and children (e.g., home visitor programs, parent-child centers, and family resource programs) (8, 13, 24); develop state and local coolaborative structures through which various public and private agencies can o provide appropriate programs for young children and new parents (13, 24, 26, 29).

Early childhood education: provide early childhood education, especially for at-risk or handicapped children from birth to before school (10, 24, 25).

During School

Children may enter school in their preschool years (ages 2 to 4), as kindergartners (ages 5 to 6), or as first graders (ages 6 to 7). At school entry, the school takes on some responsibility for meeting the child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs. The condition and support of the family are important components of children's early success in school. Recommendations of the reports on young children express concern for the quality of the educational experience, as well as for the comprehensive needs of children and their families.

School-based early childhood programs: provide high quality preschool experiences for 3 to 4 year olds (with appropriate teacher/student ratios, certified early childhood teachers. parent education and developmentally appropriate programs) (5, 8, 9, 10, 11. 24, 26); provide publicly supported child care for preschool children at risk (9, 10, 20, 24)

Elementary school programs: establish early childhood units in elementary schools to serve children ages 4 to 8 that also serve as

focal points for enhanced services to children and their families (5, 20); unlock the chronological way that children enter and progress through the system (1); assure that the curriculum is challenging and appropriate (comprehensive, integrative, age- and individually-appropriate, relevant, engaging, etc.) for all children (5, 18 ,26); provide school experiences that are responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity (10, 18, 20, 21, 22); require the integration and extension of developmentally appropriate programs and other elements of high quality early childhood services into upper elementary education (10)

Monitoring student progress: use a variety of measures to assess the progress of young children, to plan for meeting their needs, or to plan program (10, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25); monitor the academic and social progress of children carefully and early in order to provide the coordination of services and special help before children experience failure (5, 10, 11, 25, 26, 27)

Families as partners: strengthen home/school relations by building partnerships with parents (5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 18, 20, 21, 24, 26, 27); train staff on family involvement and education (10, 13)

Support services for children and families: provide before and after school child care (9, 10, 20), provide comprehensive and supporting health and social services for young children and their families that are characterized by interagency cooperation (10, 11, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25); provide adequate child nutrition programs (5, 6, 10, 21); provide parent education programs that strengthen the capacity of families (6, 9, 13, 21, 26)

Networking: create a network of support for schools that includes parents, colleges, the corporate community, and state government (5, 8, 10, 13, 24, 26)

Quality/standards: assure standards of quality for early childhood programs (in terms of developmentally appropriate programs, staff training, adult-child ratios, year-round full day programs, evaluation) (9, 10, 18, 20, 21, 24); reduce teacher-child ratios (10, 18, 26); monitor at regular intervals schools that serve large numbers of disadvantaged children (5, 8)

Federal support: expand federal support and resources for early childhood education and related child care for children at risk and for family education, with universal access for all children and families (5, 6, 10, 24).

Recommendations for the Middle Learning Years

The education of youngsters from age 10 to 14 has recently appeared on the national policy agenda. Largely ignored during this decade of ferment in educational policy, early adolescents and the middle schools or junior high

schools that serve them are now receiving increased attention. The recommendations from the national reports on the middle learning years display a fair amount of consensus.

Reports numbered 3, 12, 13, 15, and 19 contain recommendations pertaining to the overall or fundamental school experience that should be available to all youngsters in the middle learning years. Reports numbered 4, 5, 8, 11, 14, 15, 23, 24, 26, and 27 contain recommendations pertaining to the special school programs or services that should be available to at-risk youngsters in the middle learning years. Selected themes from these reports are highlighted below.

School Reform (3, 4, 5, 11, 13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 26, 27)

The theme of school reform or restructuring is expressed in several ways in these reports. It includes a call for the reform of all the elements of middle years schooling (3) as well as a call for renewed leadership, vision, and commitment to educating all children (15). Further, there is a call to review or introduce state policies (that is, formal leadership statements) that would help schools move in new directions (4, 13).

The need to reform or restructure education for at-risk youngsters is an evident and central premise in almost all the middle school reports focusing on the at-risk problem. This recommendation is sometimes stated as a general need (4, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27); sometimes as the need for a commitment to educating all children (5, 11, 26); and sometimes as the need for renewed leadership and vision (23). Advocacy for legislative action at the national, state, or local level (4, 5, 11, 15, 16) and for informing the public about the problem of at-risk youngsters (16, 25, 27) also reflect the theme of school reform.

Developmentally Appropriate Approaches (3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27)

The recommendation to use developmentally appropriate approaches for all youngsters emerges strongly in nearly every middle years report. The reports stress using developmentally appropriate approaches to curriculum and instruction, and stress the need to personalize middle years education, especially for at-risk youth. Specifically, the reports recommend the following practices.

Curriculum. Recommendations include:

- a challenging core curriculum (3, 4, 5, 11, 19, 26, 27). Instituting a core curriculum means deciding on a set of learnings that all students should acquire during the middle years. A related theme is making the curriculum challenging and holding out high expectations, especially for at-risk youngsters (11, 26, 27).

- an exploratory curriculum (3, 12, 15, 19). The need for an exploratory curriculum is recommended in order to expand students' base of experience and to capitalize on their acute curiosity. Suggested means are making elective courses available, as well as exposing

students to varied content and applications in their coursework and co-curricular activities. One report particularly emphasizes vocationally-oriented experiences for at-risk youngsters (15).

- multi-cultural content (15, 23). These reports recommend using students' cultural diversity as content for courses and co-curricular events and activities.

- personalized education (3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27). A number of the reports strongly recommend personalizing education for all middle years youngsters. Strategies include providing opportunities for self-exploration, remediation, individualization, and alternative education (3, 12, 15). Reports on at-risk students particularly stress these strategies: remediation or tutoring (4, 14, 15, 25, 26), individualized learning plans (6, 8, 11), and alternative programs in schools or in separate settings (15, 25, 27).

Instruction. Recommendations include:

- restructured schedules (3, 4, 5, 14, 15). Some reports urge extending some class periods and varying time blocks within the school day (3, 4, 15). This would serve to enhance students' relationships with teachers and peers, to give all students access to all programs, and to provide enough time for implementing more varied activities and interdisciplinary units. The restructuring of schedules that is suggested for at-risk students includes longer school days and longer school years (4, 5, 14, 15).

- active learning (3, 4, 15, 16, 19). These reports recommend physical activity, varied means of instruction, and cooperative learning as illustrative forms of active learning for all young adolescents.

- personal relationships (3, 4, 5, 8, 12, 19, 23, 27). The reports emphasize personal attention for students, extended contact with teachers, and a rewarding environment for students and adults. For at-risk youth, the need for small school units and personal attention is stressed (4, 5, 8, 23, 27).

Adequate Resources, Facilities, and Staff (3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 19, 23, 25, 26, 27)

Most reports focusing on the general needs of youngsters in the middle years are silent about resources and facilities, apparently because adequate funding and suitable facilities exist. The one report that explicitly mentions resources is seeking support for parent involvement activities (13). In contrast, several reports focusing on middle grade students at risk explicitly discuss the need for adequate, equitable funding and suitable facilities (4, 5, 11, 16, 25).

The need for staff to be adequately trained to work with young adolescents surfaces in reports on middle grade youngsters generally (3, 19). The need is underlined in reports on at-risk youth. These reports recommend the provision of continuing staff development opportunities (8, 11, 14, 23,

25, 26, 27). One report specifically mentions the state's role in providing some training and other technical assistance (26). The need for preservice education and specialized middle grades certification is also discussed (4).

On-going Evaluation (3, 5, 8, 11, 12, 15, 25, 26)

Several of the general middle years reports recommend developing new methods for assessing student and program performance (3), and using evaluation information routinely to guide on-going school improvement (3, 12, 15). Similarly, a number of reports on at-risk youth recommend evaluating programs, assessing student progress, and conducting research into the education of at-risk youngsters (4, 5, 8, 11, 15, 25, 26). These reports suggest this information be used both to monitor long-term school improvement efforts and to adjust short-term instructional plans for students at risk. In addition, two reports advocate holding schools or school systems to certain performance standards (11, 26).

School-based Decisionmaking (4, 5, 15, 19, 23)

While several reports focusing on early adolescents in general imply greater decisionmaking power for those involved in teaching and learning, only one stipulates that principals should control their own budgets, staffing, and physical plant (19). Reports on at-risk youth urge reliance on school-based leadership and shared decisionmaking in planning and implementing programs for at-risk youth (4, 5, 15, 23).

Partnerships (3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 19, 23, 26, 27)

Reports recommend that schools join with parents, community groups, governmental agencies, businesses, and/or institutions of higher education to improve schooling for middle years youngsters in general (3, 13, 19). These partnerships are described at various stages and levels of the reform effort. For example, parents are encouraged to help set school rules (3) or review state regulations (13), and schools are encouraged to adjust activities to accommodate families' schedules (19).

All but one middle years report addressing the needs of at-risk youth feature the need for schools to collaborate with one or more partners (4, 5, 8, 11, 14, 15, 23, 26, 27). A range of partnership activities is suggested. However, most of these reports recommend interagency or other collaborative relationships to ensure at-risk youth access to health and social services (4, 8, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27).

Other

Articulation. Two reports for all middle years youngsters propound articulation among schooling levels (3, 19). This entails coordinating curriculum as well as easing the transition for students and their parents. This theme also emerges in one report's recommendations for at-risk youth (23).

Brokered services. That schools provide counseling and health care services for youngsters who need them is suggested as a need for all middle

years youngsters (3, 15, 24), but especially for youngsters at risk (4, 5, 8, 11, 14, 15, 23). Use of a case management approach -- assigning a single contact person or advocate to coordinate access to various services that at-risk youngsters need -- is also proposed (14, 27).

Recommendations for the High School Years

By the time youngsters reach high school age, many who were at risk in earlier grades have already experienced school failure. They may have failed one or more courses, been held back one or more grades, or spent much of their school career tracked into remedial education. Some drop out. Others remain enrolled, but attend irregularly and exhibit other disengaged or distruptive behaviors. Still other youngsters who were not previously at risk slip into circumstances or behaviors that place them at risk during their high school years.

All but two of the high school reports contain recommendations that deal explicitly with at-risk youth. These reports (2, 5, 7, 8, 11, 14, 16, 17, 23, 25, 26, 27) refer to these youngsters as at risk, disadvantaged, potential dropouts, or dropouts. The other reports (13, 24) include but do not distinguish at-risk youngsters in their recommendations. Selected themes from the reports are described below.

Vision and Leadership (2, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27)

All the high school reports call for wide participation in the exercise of leadership and the generation of solutions to the at-risk problem.

Public awareness. Most of the high school reports (2, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 16, 17, 23, 24, 25, 27) stress the need for broad and bold consensus to change things for youngsters at risk during the high school years. Of these reports, some (2, 5, 11, 23) emphasize the need for commitment -- to the belief that all children learn, to the goal of educating all children, and to risk-taking on their behalf. Some (2, 5, 8, 16, 23, 25) cite the need specifically to restructure schools around a new vision of education. Several reports (17, 23, 27) advocate developing multiple approaches to the problem. Still other reports (2, 7, 13, 16, 25, 27) focus on gaining visibility and public agreement by mounting media campaigns, establishing state-level agencies, or passing legislation.

Adequate resources. With one exception, all the high school reports (2, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27) urge making adequate resources available for appropriate facilities, services, and programs. Over half of these reports (5, 11, 16, 23, 25, 26. 27) underscore the need to support staff development. Two reports (5. 16) recommend equalizing state funding to assure adequate resources for at-risk efforts, while another (2) recommends looking to private as well as to public funding sources.

Partnerships. All but one of the reports (2, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 17, 23, 25, 26, 27) also endorse partnerships and collaboration between

schools and other groups. Individual reports name various potential partners, including colleges; business; labor; local, state, and federal governments; social service agencies; and youngsters' families. A majority (7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 23, 26, 27) recommends strengthening or, in some cases, redefining the relationship between parents and schools. The high school reports generally see collaboration as enlisting the creative, material, political, or symbolic resources that the partners control. However, the specific purposes of the proposed partnerships vary in individual reports. For example, collaboration is to increase at-risk youth's access to the mainstream economy (7, 14), as well as to deliver comprehensive health and social services to youngsters (8, 11, 14, 23) and, in one case, to their families as well (7).

Provision of Special Programs (2, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 17, 25, 26, 27)

Almost all the high school reports call for providing at-risk youth with special programs or services.

Alternative programs. Most of the reports recommend either education in alternative settings (2, 8, 17, 25, 26, 27) or adoption of the features typically associated with such programs. These features include smaller school units or classes (2, 5, 8, 27), flexible scheduling to allow fulltime, weekend, or year-round classes (5, 14, 17), and more personalized instruction and interactions between students and adults (2, 11, 14, 17, 23, 27). Some reports (7, 8, 14, 17) propose mentoring, career guidance, and personal counseling that is as intensive and sustained as necessary. One report (7) also suggests after-school care programs for adolescents.

Links between education and work. A number of high school reports (2, 7, 8, 14, 17, 27) underscore the importance of tying education and work together for at-risk youth. The reports provide examples of various models. One report (17) describes three such arrangements: apprenticeships for on-the-job training; computer-assisted instruction in basic skills in the workplace; and instruction in job-related basic skills. Other reports (2, 7) advocate giving at-risk youth the opportunity to perform meaningful community service. Two reports (14, 17) recommend providing monetary and emotional incentives that at-risk youth especially value. These incentives could be associated with the work or service that youth perform.

Pregnancy prevention and education for teen parents. Several reports (8, 13, 14, 17, 27) recommend special programming to prevent teen pregnancies or to support teens who become parents. Aimed at young men and women (8), pregnancy prevention programs would provide comprehensive health and support services (14, 24, 27). Other programs would help teens who become parents stay in school by providing daycare for their young children (8, 27), teaching them parenting and other skills (8, 13, 17, 24), and involving them in their children's education (13).

Revision in Current Schooling Practice (2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 23, 25, 26, 27)

Fully three-fourths of the high school reports call for changing current

schooling practices, the better to accommodate youth who are at risk in the high school years.

Curriculum renewal. Although a majority of the reports (2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 23, 25, 26, 27) recommends changing the regular school curriculum, the reports disagree on exactly what changes should be made. Some reports (2, 5, 11) suggest offering all students a common curriculum. This implies ending the widespread practice of tracking at-risk students into vocational or remedial curricula. Other reports favor offering all students a challenging curriculum (25, 27) that could include remedial work in basic skills for at-risk students (14, 25, 26). Other recommended changes include providing technology (8), adequate technical training (11), and student-centered curriculum and instruction (23).

Evaluation and accountability. Over half the high school reports (5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 25, 26, 27) stress the need for making better use of data on student progress and on school programs. Several reports (11, 14, 17, 27) recommend specific measures or procedures for data-gathering. These and other reports (5, 8, 11, 17, 25, 26, 27) urge that schools assess student performance and programs accurately and base their decisions about appropriate interventions on that information. A number of reports (5, 8, 11, 14, 26) connect use of evaluation data with the idea of increased accountability.

School-based decisionmaking. Some reports (5, 14, 23, 27) recommend changing conventional forms of school governance. The new forms are described as school-based leadership, school-based management, and shared or participatory decisionmaking. Although the terms differ, they all mean a greater role in decisionmaking for school-site staff, and sometimes for parents, students, and others.

ABSTRACTS

1. William J. Bennett. (1986). First lessons: A report on elementary education. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Target population: Kindergarten through eighth grade.

Summary

Secretary Bennett notes that since 1953, no major national report has examined the condition of elementary education. This report is his effort to assume this responsibility, which he considers to be of great importance. The secretary named a study group of 21 distinguished educators to deliberate on the issue. In addition, the report is informed by staff research, by studies undertaken by public and private organizations around the country, and by correspondence from interested individuals and groups. Nevertheless, the secretary emphasizes that this statement expresses his own view. The report describes the condition and direction of elementary education, as well as makes recommendations in four areas: (a) children, parents and the community of adults, (b) curriculum, (c) school professionals, and (d) school policy.

Recommendations

Seven recommendations were offered by the study group.

- The principal goals of elementary education are to build for every child a strong foundation for further education, for democratic citizenship, and for eventual entry into responsible adulthood.
- The community of adults should exercise responsibility for nurturing, caring for, and educating children.
- Teachers should be granted certification based on demonstrated knowledge and skills, rather than on paper credentials.
- The requirements for becoming a principal should be deregulated in order to attract more acccmplished people from many fields other than education.
- Schools should increase learning time.
- Schools should unlock the chronological way that children enter and progress through the system.
- Curriculum improvement can be achieved by:

  -- teaching all students to read
  -- incorporating writing in the whole curriculum
  -- providing "hands on" experimental activities in science
  -- emphasizing problem solving in mathematics
  -- encompassing history, geography, and civics into the social studies for the youngest students

-- integrating the arts and instruction in the arts into all content areas
-- providing basic training in computers
-- including health and physical education
-- establishing a library and encouraging children to use it.

2. Business Advisory Commission. (1985, October). Reconnecting youth: The next stage of reform. Denver: Education Commission of the States.

Target Audience: Youth 14 to 24 years old.

Summary

This report treats the problems presented by America's entry-level labor force, an increasing proportion of whom are disconnecting from school, from work, and from mainstream society. Despite their poor motivation, literacy skills, and work habits, these youth can no longer be overlooked by employers. The report asks policymakers and leaders in business, labor, and education to stimulate discussion in their various sectors and to reaffirm roles for each in improving opportunities for youth. The report calls on leaders in all sectors to:

- increase visibility of the problem
- organize new, more effective partnerships and coalitions
- coordinate currently fragmented programs, agencies, and organizations
- develop community and state service opportunities
- raise public and private resources
- take the risks necessary for getting action.

The report briefly describes selected programs that it considers exemplary.

Recommendations

At the time of the report (1985), writers judged that alienated youth were being served neither by education as then structured nor by recent reforms. The report's recommendations for education leaders seek to reconnect alienated high school students -- potential or actual dropouts -- to school.

- Restructure schools. Restructuring suggestions to consider include:
  - -- schools within schools and other means to establish smaller ratios of students to adults and longer associations between students and a set of teachers
  - -- more interactive instruction, use of peer teaching and other cooperative learning techniques
  - -- reduction of tracking, especially for vocational and general students
  - -- simplification of the curriculum
  - -- creation of magnet schools and classes.

- Provide genuinely alternative programs that can effectively invite dropouts to drop back in.

- Expand cooperative relationships among secondary schools, community colleges, and four-year post-secondary institutions.

3. California State Department of Education. (1987). Caught in the middle: Educational reform for young adolescents in California public schools. Sacramento: Author.

Target population: Grades 6 through 8.

Summary

This reform agenda for the middle grades in California is the product of a year's worth of research and open hearings. Its authors intend it to stimulate discussion and debate. The case is made for the urgency of major educational reform in grades 6, 7, and 8. Academic integrity and an intellectually stimulating school environment are stressed, as is the need for attention to the personal and social development of young adolescents. The report emphasizes the unfolding intellectual power of young minds and the corresponding need for new instructional strategies and organizational models which can translate the principles of middle grade educational reform into the real world of students and teachers. The report keys its recommendations to more than 20 principles which are grouped in five areas: curriculum and instruction; student potential; organization and structure; teaching and administration; and leadership and partnership.

Recommendations

The principles and some illustrative examples of recommendations that would facilitate implementation in the middle school include:

- achieving academic excellence through curriculum and instruction. Every middle grade student should:

  -- pursue a common, comprehensive, academically oriented core curriculum as well as study elective and exploratory curricula

  -- develop the capacities for critical thought and effective communication

  -- be helped to personalize ideals and to develop the ability to make reasoned moral and ethical choices

  -- develop a repertoire of learning strategies and study skills to promote reflective thought and systematic progress toward independent learning

  -- be the object of instructional practices that emphasize active learning strategies. Active learning strategies should be consistent with the goals of the core curriculum and the developmental characteristics of young adolescents (e.g., use of student projects, paperbacks, videos, and other materials supplementary to textbooks).

- realizing students' potential for intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. Every middle grade student should:

-- receive timely information about the relationship between middle and high school curricula; should be encouraged and assisted to attain content mastery that will provide opportunities for exercising the broadest range of later academic options (e.g., no automatic tracking by primary language, handicap, or general ability). Underrepresented minority students should be offered special efforts and incentives

-- participate in educational programs that foster personal commitments to academic achievement (e.g., extended time blocks to allow for personal relationships with teachers and cooperative learning; peer tutoring)

-- receive specific primary health care services and counseling if indicated (e.g., school-based student study teams, advising programs, and clinics; access to community services through interagency collaboration).

- creating new learning environments through organization and structural changes. Every middle grade student should:

  -- experience a school culture which reflects a student-centered philosophy

  -- have access to and be encouraged to take part in extracurricular and intramural activities which feature participation, interaction, competition, and service

  -- be accountable for significant standards of academic excellence and personal behavior (e.g., participate with parents and school personnel in formulating rules)

  -- experience a successful transition among elementary, middle, and high schools (e.g., gradual movement from self-contained to departmentalized organization; inter-school visitation and assignment of welcoming mentors for students)

  -- attend a middle school that is configured to include grades 6, 7, and 8, and that is funded by the same state formula as elementary and high schools

  -- experience a school schedule that directly reflects other principles of middle grade education and that facilitates equal access by all students to the full range of academic and student support programs (e.g., differentiated and/or alternating time blocks for various subjects, including counseling and guidance programs)

  -- experience programs that are assessed comprehensively and through various measures from which the data are applied to improve programs and services (e.g., development of nontraditional assessment measures, reports to local communities).

- preparing for exemplary teaching and administration. Middle grade teachers and principals should:

  -- have specialized training in middle grades core curriculum, instructional strategies, and young adolescent development

  -- participate in comprehensive, long-range staff development programs which emphasize professional collegiality.

- defining the leadership and partnership catalysts for reform.

  -- Parents, communities, and school boards should share accountability for middle grade educational reform (e.g., hold local forums to discuss recommendations)

  -- Local school districts, institutions of higher education, and the State Department of Education should promote the creation and funding of 100 model middle schools.

4. Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1989, June). Turning points: Preparing American youth for the 21st century. Report of the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Target population: At-risk youth 10 to 15 years old.

Summary

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development looks on early adolescence as a significant turning point for future life choices. Especially concerned with youngsters who are vulnerable to multiple high-risk behaviors and to school failure, the council conferred with selected experts in health, school-community relations, and schooling, reviewed papers on these subjects, and visited a handful of schools across the country. The council concluded that schools are potentially society's most powerful force to turn at-risk youth around. However, the current organization and curriculum of schools renders them unfit for the task. The council's report summarizes the risks for young adolescents and suggests how schools should reconstitute themselves to meet the intellectual and emotional needs of all children, and of at-risk children most of all.

Recommendations

The report recommends that middle grade schools:

- create small communities for learning. Various configurations can promote the desired intimacy and stability. These include schools-within-schools, teams, and assignment of adult advisors.

- teach a core of common knowledge. This core academic program would teach youngsters to think critically, to develop healthy and ethical lifestyles, and to become responsible citizens. Youth service would be included along with more traditional course work; courses themselves would be organized around interdisciplinary study. New approaches to assessment would have to accompany these new curricular emphases.

- ensure success for all students. Instructional arrangements that would support this recommendation include cooperative learning techniques (such as small group activities and cross-age tutoring) to substitute for tracking; flexible scheduling within the school day and in an extended school day or year; adequate resources (staffing, facilities, and materials) and contractual authority to carry these out.

- empower teachers and administrators for school decisionmaking. This recommendation would give teachers a role in schoolwide governance as well as greater control and responsibility over the time and specific content of their own instructional program. Serving with teachers in the governance structure could be other school staff, parents,

students, and community representatives. A house leader or lead teacher would perform some coordinating and administrative duties for each subunit within the school and would also participate in schoolwide governance.

- employ staff who are expert in working with young adolescents. This would entail preservice preparation in early adolescent development, cultural differences, teamwork, and in one or more subject matters. Middle grades certification or endorsement on teachers' licenses would reflect their special training.

- foster youngsters' health and fitness. Schools can accomplish this recommendation include by providing access to health and counseling services and by becoming health-promoting environments. This should include assignment of on-site health coordinators and consideration of school-based clinics.

- engage families in their young adolescents' education. Schools can foster meaningful relationships with parents by communicating with them about school programs and student progress, helping them support learning at home and in school, and enabling them to participate in school governance.

- connect schools with communities. School-community collaboration should entail use of community resources to support curricular and co-curricular activities -- including career guidance and the identification of student service opportunities within the community -- and the establishment of formal partnerships to facilitate student access to health and other social services.

The report also specifies what other groups can do to expedite the implementation of these recommendations in schools. For example, leaders in higher education are asked to institute changes in preservice education of middle grades teachers. States are asked to convene task forces to consider the recommendations as well as new policy mechanisms for motivating change. National leaders are urged to establish a comprehensive federal policy for youth development. The private and philanthropic sectors are encouraged to extend their efforts on behalf of early adolescents and to participate in a continuing national forum on middle grades education.

5. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (1988). An imperiled generation: Saving urban schools. Lawrenceville, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Target population: Urban school children.

Summary

This report focuses on what the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching perceives as today's most urgent educational challenge -- the improvement of urban schools. The report expresses the concern that the reform movement of the early 1980s, launched to upgrade the education of all students, is irrelevant to many children in urban schools and has bypassed the most deeply troubled schools. Primary data sources for the report were visits to six cities, where students, teachers, and principals were interviewed and school conditions and procedures were observed. Based on these data, the report proposes a comprehensive program representing the best practices of which the foundation was aware. The proposal consists of the following priorities:

- commitment to educate all children
- new governance procedures
- an educational renewal program for the local school
- partnerships to link the school to a network of local, state, and federal support.

For each priority, the report describes current school conditions and problems, and recommends ways to address these problems. The report also proposes creation of a national Urban Schools Program. Proposed provisions include increased funding for Head Start, child nutrition, and Chapter I; subsidized afternoon and summer enrichment for poor children; teacher renewal through institutes and teacher centers; loans for school construction and refurbishing; grants for school innovation; and incentives for higher education to establish special relationships with urban schools.

Recommendations

The report recommends actions in its priority areas:

- affirming that every student can succeed. Urban schools should have high expectations for all students, not just the most advantaged. They should provide developmentally appropriate approaches to learning.
- building an effective governance structure. Elements should include:
  - -- school-based leadership and decision-making
  - -- school board support through provision of adequate financial resources, selection of qualified administrators and teachers, and

recruitment of groups and agencies seeking to enrich school programs
-- regular evaluation of school goals, procedures, and student progress
-- review of unsatisfactory progress by a team of education officials, parents, teachers, and college faculty

- creating a network of support beyond the school. Connections should be forged with parents, higher education, corporations, and the state. States should avoid tedious regulation and should assure greater equity in financing.

- introducing at every school a comprehensive program of renewal.

  Elements should include:

  -- small school units
  -- clearly defined school goals and a core curriculum
  -- flexible scheduling arrangements (e.g., weekend programs, extended school year, and early college entry)
  -- good facilities and equipment

This last recommendation specifically proposes suggestions related to the early learning years. These suggestions include:

- fund adequate child nutrition programs

- establish community health projects

- provide Head Start or an alternative preschool program to every eligible child

- establish an ungraded basic school with small classes and an emphasis on language (reading, writing, communication) for children in kindergarten to fourth grade

- encourage parent involvement

- provide good facilities by refurbishing schools, providing learning resources, such as libraries and laboratories, all of which is supported by federal financing.

6. Child Welfare League of America. (1988). The first 100 days: A children's initiative -- Direction for President Bush and the 101st Congress. Washington, DC: Author.

Target population: The focus encompasses the health and welfare of the pregnant mother through to the high school student.

Summary

Formed in 1910 in response to a call by President Theodore Roosevelt for the first White House Conference on Children, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is now the oldest voluntary organization in this country concerned with the improvement of care for abused, neglected and troubled children. It is comprised of 525 public and voluntary agencies and 1000 affiliates. In October 1987 the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) initiated a non-partisan public education campaign, the Children's Presidential Campaign. The goal was to place children's issues high on the agenda of every presidential candidate in the coming election. As part of the campaign, CWLA developed a 12-point program to form the basis of a national policy for children and families. To continue the process, CWLA produced this document. The First 100 Days is both a conceptual framework and a list of specific recommendations for executive and legislative branch action. These recommendations have been solicited from member agencies, and are thought to represent the best thinking in child welfare practice. Some of these recommendations are directly related to the primary concerns of child welfare advocates (e.g., child abuse and neglect, adoptions, income security). Others are of special interest to educators, many of which are summarized below.

Recommendations

Congress should provide assistance to young children and their families by:

- establishing a health care financing mechanism so that all Americans, of all ages, working or non-working, have either public or private health insurance to cover physical and mental health care
- reviewing all existing federal programs that affect children and their families, and craft comprehensive new legislation that would initiate a national commitment to preserve and strengthen families through a broad range of supports (e.g., prevention and intervention)
- increasing funds for existing food and nutrition programs for children
- fully funding the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program so that all eligible low-income women, infants and children can be served

- reintroducing and passing the Act for Better Child Care, which would establish a framework for the provision of quality, affordable and accessible child care in every state, including family and center care, with training, and monitoring and upgrading of salaries and standards

- fully funding the Head Start program

Congress should provide assistance to adolescents at risk by:

- establishing and fully funding comprehensive programs for pregnant adolescents, young parents, and their children

- passing the Voluntary National Youth Service/American Conservation Corps Act, which would establish a youth work program modeled after those of the 1930's

- passing a major youth employment bill to improve the Job Training Partnership Act, with emphasis on assisting disadvantaged youth

- promoting and funding youth participation programs emphasizing peer support to prevent teen pregnancy, suicide, and substance abuse

- increasing federal funding for Chapter 1 Compensatory Education programs.

7. Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship. (1988, November). The forgotten half: Pathways to success for America's youth and young families. Washington, D.C.: The William T. Grant Foundation.

Target Audience: Non-college bound youth 16 to 24 years old.

Summary

This report focuses on the needs of the estimated 20 million youth from age 16 to 24 whose schooling ends with a high school diploma or less. Often viewed by society and themselves as failures, these young people face more limited futures than did non-college bound youth a generation ago. In the coming years, they can expect underemployment or unemployment, and correspondingly constrained opportunities for supporting families or enjoying material success. The report documents a pattern of underinvestment in American youth generally and in this group specifically. To provide the needed opportunities for service, education, employment, and training, the report advocates examining existing programs and expanding those that work well. In addition, the report suggests consolidating existing delivery systems, targeting efforts for at-risk youth and others with acute problems, and intervening with those who missed prevention or early intervention programs.

Recommendations

The report recommends four major strategies to help non-college bound youth enter the adult world successfully. Recommendations with implications for schools especially are highlighted below.

- Enhance the quality of youth-adult relationships. Given the increasing strains on American family life, the public and private sectors should increase their responsiveness to working parents. Examples related to education include the need for:

  -- new forms of parent involvement in schools
  -- development of after-school care for older children and adolescents
  -- mentoring programs
  -- revision of welfare regulations to accept fathers' participation in education and training programs as part of the required parental obligation.

- Expand community supports for families and individual opportunities for service. Examples for schools include:

  -- development of systems for coordinating a full array of developmental, preventive, and remedial services for families through community schools or other means
  -- creation of attractive opportunities for youth to serve their schools and their communities.

- Extend and improve employment and training opportunities. Examples for schools include:

-- creation of alliances or compacts of business, education, and community resources to monitor and reward individual achievement
-- development of approaches to ease the passage from school to work
-- establishment of special funds to improve schooling as outlined.

- Support legislation for demonstration projects designed to increase access to post-secondary education.

8. Committee for Economic Development. (1987) Children in need: Investment strategies for the educationally disadvantaged. New York, NY: Author.

Target population: All disadvantaged children.

Summary

The Committee for Economic Development (CED) is an independent nonprofit, nonpartisan, and nonpolitical research and educational organization of over 200 business executives and educators. In 1987, CED reported its recommendations for meeting the special needs of the growing underclass of the educationally disadvantaged. The report urges business leaders, educators, and policymakers to look beyond the traditional classroom boundaries and provide early and sustained intervention in the lives of these children. The report calls for partnerships among families, school, business, and community organizations that can bolster the health, education, and well-being of the whole child, beginning with the formative years. The report recommends that policymakers adopt a three-part strategy for improving the prospects of disadvantaged children, specifically:

- prevention through early intervention -- programs that focus on children from birth to age five and on teenagers who are most at risk of premature parenthood
- restructuring the foundations of education -- changes that are needed in the structure, staffing, management, and financing of schools
- retention and re-entry -- targeted programs that combine comprehensive educational, employment, health, and social services for students still in school and for dropouts.

Brief descriptions of promising programs are also included.

Recommendations

Early learning years intervention programs should:

- provide prenatal and postnatal health care and nutritional guidance for pregnant teens and other high-risk mothers and follow-up health care and developmental screening for their infants
- keep pregnant teens and those with babies in school
- provide parenting education for both mothers and fathers, family health care, and nutritional guidance
- provide day care for mothers in school, preferably on site
- provide quality child care arrangements for poor working parents that stress social development and school readiness

- provide quality preschool programs for all disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds

- mobilize support systems on behalf of disadvantaged families and children to provide home visitor programs, parent-child centers, and family resource programs.

Under the second strategy of restructuring the foundations of education are recommendations that pertain to early elementary schooling:

- reevaluate schools that serve large numbers of disadvantaged children and the assignment of accountability measures to administrators, staff members, and school districts

- develop new relationships between the school district and community that encourage schools to reach out to parents, community members, and business to help meet the special academic, social, and health needs of disadvantaged children and adolescents.

CED recommends the restructuring of schools to provide a productive educational environment. Such an environment would include skilled and caring teachers and administrators, a safe and inviting facility, stimulating academic curriculum, and necessary social supports. Until now the "neglected alleyway of educational reform," middle and junior high schools should become a major focus of reform. This would entail new and comprehensive research and scrutiny, and restructuring along general lines, as well as adoption of the following:

- smaller schools, smaller classes, and more individualized instruction

- better guidance counseling

- greater parental involvement

- specialized teacher training and recruitment.

High school programs for disadvantaged youth should:

- provide smaller, alternative settings that focus on improving students' motivation, skills, and self-esteem

- combine work experience and basic skills training

- improve career and personal guidance services, and institute mentoring programs

- integrate up-to-date technology in the curriculum

- help pregnant teens and teen mothers to stay in school, for example, by providing prenatal and parenting education, and on-site day care for teens' children

- develop new relationships with parents and communities for meeting the special academic, social, and health needs of disadvantaged adolescents
- assure continuous funding
- provide for ongoing evaluation of students' progress and program success
- hold school districts, administrators, and staff members accountable for the performance of schools serving large numbers of disadvantaged children.

9. Council of Chief State School Officers. (1988). Early childhood and family education: Foundations for success. Washington, DC: Author.

Target Population: From birth through age 5.

Summary

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) explored ways to meet the myriad needs of children and their families in order for children to maximize benefits from school. The council developed three related documents: 1) a statement on the nationwide importance of early childhood and family education, 2) state-by-state profiles on state actions to meet the comprehensive needs of children ages zero through five and their parents, and 3) a guide for state action, delineating steps for state involvement in early childhood and family education and related services.

The CCSSO statement calls for the creation of new ways of supporting families and assuring that each child's earliest years provide the foundation for a creative life. It focuses on the responsibilities of educators and calls for the establishment of eleven state guarantees for at-risk children and youth, including provision of early childhood and parent education programs. The council believes that the single most important investment to be made in education is the provision of high-quality programs for the nation's youngest children, especially for those who are most at risk, and for their families. This investment must be accompanied by strategies for establishing strong standards of quality and the assurance of broad and deep collaboration among agencies at each governmental level and across levels.

CCSSO calls for direct, creative and expanded assistance to young children and their families based on the following principles:

- equal access to high-quality early childhood programs and services to all children
- access to assistance that will help all families care for and educate their children
- access to early childhood programs that assist each child to develop a full range of fundamental social, emotional, physical and cognitive abilities
- extension of the early childhood developmental program into and integrated with the elementary school program
- coordination of resources and programs for young children and families to assure availability, effectiveness, and comprehensiveness.

Recommendations

The CCSSO suggests the following strategies for change:

- universally available high-quality early childhood services for all children with concentration of public resources on early childhood programs for children at risk

- strengthening capacities of families by providing needed assistance, including:

  -- programs that reach new parents and establish supportive partnerships to help their children
  -- support in fulfilling family roles at home
  -- assurances that the patterns and scheduling of formal schooling will be consonant with previous experiences of the children
  -- sensitivity to the culture of the family

- assuring standards of quality for early childhood programs that will require:

  -- a developmentally appropriate approach
  -- prepared and supported staff
  -- appropriate adult-child ratio
  -- a length of program day, year, and the provision of continuous learning environment matched to family needs
  -- evaluation of programs and child progress based on developmental goals

- broad and deep collaboration for comprehensive services to young children and families:

  -- supported by the public and policymakers through interagency and intergovernmental forums to establish clear goals and solutions for children's needs, to implement services jointly, and to provide continual evaluation of progress
  -- encouraged by the leadership of schools
  -- required by statutory provisions
  -- supported by increased funding.

10. Council of Chief State School Officers. (1988). A guide for state action: Early childhood and family education. Washington, DC: Author.

Target Population: From birth through age 5.

Summary

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) explored ways to meet the myriad needs of children and their families in order for children to maximize benefits from school. The council developed three related documents: 1) a statement on the nationwide importance of early childhood and family education, 2) state-by-state profiles on state actions to meet the comprehensive needs of children ages zero through five and their parents, and 3) a guide for state action, delineating steps for state involvement in early childhood and family education and related services.

The guide is designed to assist each state assess its current early childhood and family education policies and programs by drawing upon the collective experience of other states. The information was collected primarily by a CCSSO study commission survey on early childhood education, child care, parental education, and health and social services programs for young children. It provides the most comprehensive set of descriptions to date on state and agency action to address the complex needs of young at-risk children and their families. The expectation is that chief state school officers could use this guide in setting the direction and determining the best actions for implementation of programs in their states.

The guide provides recommendations for action in support of quality early childhood and family education in five areas: the state policy role, coalitions and coordination, program guidelines, staffing, and national support. The guide also presents an overview of the unmet needs of children at risk and the barriers to comprehensive service, as well as examples illustrating how these have been addressed or resolved in some settings. The guide describes the federal context of state efforts to provide early childhood and family education, and concludes with policy recommendations.

Recommendations

The guide's recommendations are listed by the five areas below.

- State policy role, states should:

  -- provide comprehensive and accessible early childhood and family education services for all children from birth
  -- establish a state council and encourage establishment of local councils to advise in planning for delivery of comprehensive services
  -- establish standards and regulations to ensure high quality comprehensive services (including but not limited to: developmentally appropriate practices; family involvement and

education; appropriate adult-child ratios, facilities, staff training and credentialing; and optional full-day and full-year schedules)
-- develop multiple measures for assessing the readiness and development of children
-- fund the services through existing federal, state, and local resources as well as new public and private funding
-- serve as an example for other state agencies and the private sector by establishing models of early childhood services for their employees.

- Coalitions and coordination, states should:

  -- develop an integrated policy and action plan
  -- acknowledge, build upon, and enhance successful systems and providers (both non-profit and for-profit)
  -- establish coalitions of educators, human services providers, business leaders, and citizens to assist with securing funding, ensuring access, and providing staff training for the delivery of services.

- Program guidelines, states should:

  -- programs should contain child care and developmentally appropriate education components and be sensitive to the culture and language of the child and family
  -- states should require the integration and extension of the developmental approach and other elements of comprehensive high quality early childhood services into elementary education
  -- states should establish a data collection and monitoring system which among other things, identifies the needs of young children and promotes the coordination of services for them.

- Staffing, states should:

  -- establish competency-based standards for different staffing levels, as well provide quality supervision and ongoing training on site
  -- establish early childhood staffing training programs on family involvement and education.

- National support, states should:

  -- states should participate in the development of a national clearinghouse on model programs, effective practices, and relevant research
  -- the national education agenda should include resources for the continuation of research on early childhood services
  -- the federal government should expand resources for support to the states for universally accessible services.

11. The Council of Chief State School Officers. (1987). Assuring school success for students at risk. Washington, D.C.: Author.

Target population: All at-risk students, preschool to grade 12.

Summary

In 1987, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) issued a statement presenting the Council's beliefs about the problems of students at risk. The statement set forth "guarantees" that states should implement to assure that at-risk children and youth receive the educational and supporting services essential for educational success. These guarantees were premised on the following principles:

- In each state there must be an equitable opportunity for each person to earn a high school diploma at public expense.
- Each person, with the rare exceptions of some who have severe disabilities, has the capacity to meet the standards for a high school diploma.
- Recognizing that different individuals learn in different ways, how students are successfully taught should vary; what each student learns, however, must include a challenging and common curriculum.
- The nation's chief education officers are obligated to provide education programs and to assure other necessary related services so that this nation enters the 21st Century with virtually all students graduating from high school.

The statement acknowledges that local, state, and federal government all contribute financial support for education. However, the CCSSO stresses that the state bears the fundamental responsibility for elementary and secondary education. Moreover, states must lead the way to provide resources for uniformly high quality programs, to strengthen the practice of teaching, to provide help and incentives for increasing schools' effectiveness, and to guarantee all children a genuine opportunity for high school graduation backed by affirmative practices for children at risk.

Recommendations

Of the ten guarantees, one guarantee pertains specifically to early childhood and three pertain to early elementary school.

- States should guarantee a parent and early childhood development program beginning ideally for children by age three. but no later than age four
- States should guarantee a program for participation of families as partners in learning at home and at school as their children proceed toward high school graduation.

- States should guarantee effective supporting health and social services to overcome conditions which put the student at risk of failing to graduate from high school.

- States should guarantee education information about students, schools, school districts, and the states to enable identification of students at risk and to report on school conditions and performance. The information must be sufficient to let one know whether the above guarantees are being met and to provide a basis for local and state policies to improve student and school performance.

According to the CCSSO statement, children and youth at risk of failure to graduate from high school should be guaranteed:

- quality program and supplementary educational services that are integrated with the regular program and are necessary for making progress toward high school graduation

- enrollment in a school which demonstrates substantial and sustained student progress

- enrollment in a school with appropriately certified staff which has continuous professional development

- enrollment in a school with systematically designed and delivered instruction of demonstrable effectiveness, and with adequate and effective learning technologies and materials

- enrollment in a school with safe and functional facilities

- an individual learning guide mapping the way to high school graduation, prepared with parental and student input and approval

- a program enlisting parents as partners in learning at home and at school

- health and social services effective in overcoming conditions which put the student at risk

- education information about students, schools, school districts, and states to enable identification of students at risk, diagnosis of school needs, and monitoring of progress

- procedures to assure these guarantees are met.

12. Dorman, Gayle. (1987). Improving middle-grade schools: A framework for action. Carrboro, NC: Center for Early Adolescence.

Target population: Middle school grades.

Summary

This monograph describes the Middle Grades Assessment Program (MGAP) of the Center for Early Adolescence as a tool to help schools become more academically productive and developmentally responsive. The description includes a brief characterization of early adolescence and a revised definition of effective schools. Both inform the criteria MGAP uses in its instruments for assessment and school improvement planning. According to MGAP, effective middle grade schools are:

- safe
- academically effective
- responsive to young adolescents' developmental needs for diversity; competence and achievement; structure and clear limits; meaningful participation in school and community; self-exploration and self-definition; positive social interaction both with peers and adults; and physical activity.

Case studies of MGAP efforts in 11 schools are included. The monograph states that the MGAP approach works because it is a participatory, building-based process that promotes and reinforces commitment to school improvement. Among the lessons drawn from the case studies are that schools are capable of assessing and improving themselves, but that participants' energy flows unevenly during the effort; the effort must begin with a clear statement of goals and responsibilities; the principal and teachers play crucial roles, and their supervisors, students' parents, and citizens are also instrumental.

Recommendations

MGAP experience suggests that successful middle school improvement must meet several conditions. These include that:

- those adopting the MGAP approach should first accept the MGAP criteria for defining successful middle grade schools
- the school principal must be receptive to critical scrutiny of the entire school and be prepared for the intense momentum for change that may ensue
- leadership for the assessment must be clearly defined, acknowledged, and accepted
- the principal and faculty must perceive a problem that an assessment could illuminate and be willing to address it

- the principal and faculty must be at least minimally competent and functioning in a school at least minimally safe and orderly
- the school and district administration should guarantee that they will not undermine the use of assessment findings in the improvement effort.

13. Education Commission of the States. (1988). Drawing in the family: Family involvement in schools. Denver: Author.

Target population: School age children.

Summary

In this report, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) advocates that states enact policies to enhance parent involvement because parent involvement guarantees children's success in school. Three ways to increase parent involvement are seen:

- involving parents from the very beginning of parenthood
- raising the nation's consciousness of the importance of parent involvement
- reaching out to parents at the local level.

The report contains examples of activities or programs parents and educators can undertake, descriptions of selected state programs, and recommended state actions. Some references to supporting research are also included. Individual chapters treat connecting families and schools, improving the home environment, and improving the school environment. Recommended strategies for state action are grouped under three main headings: provision of leadership, encouragement of innovation, and support for legislation.

Recommendations:

The report acknowledges that programs for involving parents in secondary schools are rare, but affirms their effectiveness in improving student achievement. The report also notes that teenage parents -- in or out of school -- should be included with other types of families in parent involvement programs.

While stressing the centrality of schools themselves in involving parents, the report outlines how states can help. States can:

- provide leadership. For example, states can create a hospitable climate for parent involvement and raise public awareness about the economic and social benefits of involvement in the schools.
- encourage innovations. To help schools implement programs, states can provide creative funding; develop and/or recognize exemplary programs; provide training and other technical assistance; and identify and coordinate governmental and community resources.
- support legislation. States can be proactive in supporting new legislation that promotes parent involvement and reactive in clearing away restrictive legislation. Other legislative or administrative actions include initiating interagency collaboration, naming parents to state accountability committees, and establishing state offices for parent involvement.

14. Institute for Educational Leadership. (1987). Dropouts in America: Enough is known for action. Washington, D.C.: Author.

Target population: At-risk children (potential and actual dropouts).

Summary

This report was sponsored by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) to determine how much was known about attacking the problem of school dropouts. After reviewing research, existing programs, and policy trends, the authors concluded that enough was known to make a start. The report itself profiles dropouts, identifies the major risk factors associated with the decision to leave school, and suggests prevention strategies that begin in the early elementary grades and continue through high school. Both school-based and other intervention strategies for dropouts are also discussed; brief references to model programs are interspersed throughout the text. However, an advisor to the report cautions that the recommended practices are better understood as promising rather than proven. The report's various policy recommendations express the themes that dropout programs must:

- respond to adolescents' distinct and individual needs
- respond to the many social and economic problems that afflict poor and minority youngsters
- address the crisis of competency that immobilizes many at-risk youths.

The report appeals for a comprehensive, integrated approach to dropout prevention. This approach would incorporate ongoing collaboration between the public and private sectors to provide individualized education, remediation, social services, skill development, and employment for at-risk youth.

Recommendations:

Recommendations for dropout prevention and intervention during the school years include:

- mentorship and intensive, sustained counseling for troubled youngsters
- integration of comprehensive health and support systems for pregnancy prevention and services for teenaged mothers
- concentrated remediation using individualized instruction and competency-based curricula
- effective school-business collaboration providing access to the mainstream economy
- financial or emotional incentives for students to stay in school

- full-time, year-round schools and enriched summer programs
- parent involvement in educational and discipline matters
- school-based management and accountability based on accurate attendance and dropout information
- appropriate resources and heightened accountability from local school systems and states.

15. Massachusetts Advocacy Center and The Center for Early Adolescence. (1988). Before it's too late: Dropout prevention in the middle grades. Carrboro, NC: Author.

Target population: Vulnerable youngsters, ages 11-15.

Summary

This monograph draws from research on early school leaving, middle level education, school reform, and adolescent development to explore how schools can strengthen their holding power for dropout-prone youngsters ages 11-15. The monograph introduces its description of the middle school features and practices that successfully deter dropouts with sections on why dropouts leave school and how middle schools are currently performing. The overriding theme is that good schools themselves are the most compelling reason for students to resist dropping out. Schools deemed successful encourage personal interactions through team teaching and small school units, provide a diverse curriculum with an interdisciplinary focus and connections to student lives, use flexible scheduling, and systematize teacher-based guidance. The authors argue that all segments of the school community must be involved in efforts to increase individual schools' holding power. School district administrators, board members, and state officials must bolster these efforts with political, symbolic, and substantive acts of their own. One critical step for district-level decisionmakers is to review and revise district-wide policies that are developmentally and educationally hazardous and that contribute to dropping out. The authors suggest staging the reform of middle school education over more than five years. An initial stage of review, assessment, and planning should take up to one year. An intermediate stage of implementing initial plans and planning and implementing structural, curricular, and instructional reforms should last from two to five years. A final stage of establishing evaluation and change as an on-going process is viewed as an on-going, long range task.

Recommendations:

The report summarizes promising approaches to dropout prevention as found in the literature. These include:

- academic and remedial approaches such as developmentally responsive, accelerated learning, summer programs, cooperative learning, and cross-age tutoring
- experiential career exploration
- counseling and social services in collaboration with other agencies to support students in crisis as well as in normal development
- alternative education in separate settings or schools-within-schools that adhere to principles for successful schools
- overall school improvement to strengthen the learning environment for all students and adults -- through the features described above.

The authors present seven basic principles to guide dropout prevention efforts in the middle grades. According to the authors, dropout prevention programs should:

- focus primarily on changing school practices and policies that put students at risk
- focus on broadening and diversifying opportunities in the educational mainstream so that students with a variety of learning styles, paces, and needs can experience success
- be developed on a school-by-school basis with the involvement of teachers, parents, students, administrative staff, and community workers at all schools
- take into account the normal developmental needs of young adolescents
- acknowledge the broad cultural diversity and richness of the student population
- include parents in meaningful roles
- actively collaborate with community-based agencies to provide services for students at risk in middle school and to expand programs offered to all students.

16. MDC, Inc. (1988). America's shame, America's hope: Twelve million youth at risk. Chapel Hill, NC: Author.

Target population: At-risk youth.

Summary

Produced for the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, this report examines how at-risk youth fared in the education reform movement of the 1980s. The report is based on discussion by a distinguished panel of experts in youth training and education. Their discussion was informed by a review of the federal role in education reform and a 1987-88 survey of actions states took during the 1980s. The results of this inquiry are reported in various forms. These include examples of programs by program type, narratives of state actions in 14 states (including Maryland), a continuum describing the phases of state policy and program development, and recommendations tied to 13 findings.

The report concludes that there is no comprehensive federal policy for at-risk youth, despite public warnings from many quarters. States also lack overarching policy. State actions have been piecemeal, and inadequately funded and evaluated. A third of the report's recommendations is directed to federal policymakers, and the remainder to state policymakers.

Recommendations:

Recommendations directed to state policymakers include:

- establishment of a standing commission on at-risk youth to recommend a concerted program of state action
- establishment of a single cabinet-level agency or office to implement and coordinate the commission's recommendations
- conduct of a public awareness campaign to inform the public of the needs of at-risk youth and to educate school personnel and others about available programs and models
- passage of comprehensive legislation establishing state policy for meeting the needs of at-risk youth and increasing their graduation rates
- restructuring of schools by local districts
- fiscal reform to assure equity between richer and poorer school districts.

17. Miller, S. M., Nicolau, S., Orr, M. T., Valdivieso, R., & Walker, G. (1988). Too late to patch: Reconsidering second-chance opportunities for Hispanic and other dropouts. Washington, D.C.: Hispanic Policy Development Project.

Target Audience: Hispanic and other youth 16 to 24 years old.

Summary

This report explores the problems that currently prevent young Hispanics from gaining employment in the economic mainstream. Essentially, many Hispanic youth lack the skills that available jobs require. They also lack access to appropriate training. Even those who have acquired basic skills find they can only get low-level, dead end jobs. In part, the report is based on a survey of programs funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) in 30 major Hispanic markets. The report examines gaps in service and support provided by JTPA, one of very few sources of training for out-of-school, unskilled youth. An appendix presents the study results.

Overall, the report concludes that existing arrangements fail to serve the estimated 1.8 million Hispanics and significant numbers of other at-risk American youth. The writers believe that good programs can benefit at-risk Hispanic youth, and that developing these programs is both manageable and affordable. Although they recommend collaboration among government, schools, business, labor, and social services, they also stress that collaboration alone is not enough. Collaborating parties also need to discard old, individual systems and create new ones.

Recommendations

The report describes "supply-side options" to increase the employability of Hispanic youth. These include the following recommendations that relate specifically to education at the high school level.

- Incorporate proposed federal changes in JTPA. This would enable service to at-risk youth in school between ages 14 and 21. Programs should include:

  -- instruction in enriched basic skills and tutoring during the school year; instruction in life-skills and work experience in the summer
  -- counseling and mentoring
  -- training in pre-employment and socialization skills.

- Follow up students for two years after they leave school. The state board of education should operate a centralized data bank that tracks the needs of individuals and available services.

- Use multiple program approaches to reach recent dropouts. Such programs should link education and job training, acknowledge these youths' need for cash and short-term rewards; and inculcate hope for the future.

- Outreach intensively to long-term dropouts. This should include parent education for young mothers through their children's schools.

- Provide alternative schools for returning dropouts. These schools should offer students counseling and promote staff's personal support for students. Vocational education programs can function as acceptable alternatives only if they provide up-to-date technical training and include job placement.

- Link education and work. The workplace should offer education through apprenticeship programs, computer-assisted instruction, or job-related instruction in basic skills.

- Evaluate programs over time. Reliable evaluations are needed to assess the effectiveness of new and continuing programs.

18. National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1987). Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8. Washington, DC: Author.

Target Population: Children from birth through age 8.

Summary

This document is the work of a national commission of early childhood professionals. It presents the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) official position statement on developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8. Guidelines, generated from research and practice, provide specific suggestions about the application of developmentally appropriate practices in four areas: curriculum, adult-child interactions, relations between the home and program, and evaluation. Specific descriptions of appropriate as well as inappropriate practices are suggested for each age group (infants, toddlers, three-, four- and five-year olds, and primary grades). The document is designed for teachers, administrators, parents, policymakers, and others involved with programs serving young children in schools, centers, and homes. The document concludes with a discussion of major policy implications and recommendations.

Recommendations

The following are non-age specific summaries of the guidelines proposed in this document and are designed to provide an overview of developmentally appropriate practices.

- Curriculum should:

  -- be comprehensive and integrative, addressing physical, emotional, social, and cognitive developmental needs
  -- be age-appropriate and individually appropriate
  -- promote creative and active exploration, as well as intensive involvement and interaction with adults, other children, and materials
  -- be relevant to the lives of young children and based upon learning activities and materials that are concrete and real
  -- be responsive to a wide range of developmental interests and abilities
  -- be stimulating, challenging, engaging
  -- be multicultural and non-stereotyping
  -- provide a balance between rest and active movement.

- Adult-child interaction should:

  -- respond quickly and directly to children's' needs
  -- provide varied opportunities for communication
  -- facilitate children's' successful completion of tasks by providing support, physical proximity, encouragement
  -- be attuned to children exhibiting stress and provide comfort appropriately

-- facilitate the development of self-esteem
-- facilitate the development of self-control
-- exercise responsibility and adequate supervision over children.

- Relations between the home and program should encourage:

  -- parents to observe and participate in their children's development, and establish and maintain frequent contacts between teachers and families
  -- exchange information and insights between teachers and parents regularly
  -- teachers, parents, agencies, programs, and consultants who may have educational responsibility for children at different times to share developmental information about them as they pass from one level or program to another.

- Developmental evaluation of children should:

  -- use diverse information, particularly observations by teachers and parents
  -- identify children who have special needs and/or at risk and plan appropriate curriculum for them
  -- secure a developmentally appropriate placement in public schools for every child of legal entry age.

In order to implement these guidelines, NAEYC recommends that policymakers at the state and local levels support college-level specialized preparation in early childhood/child development, supervision for teachers who lack experience with younger age groups, and appropriate adult-child ratios.

19. National Association of Secondary School Principals. (1985). An agenda for excellence at the middle level. Reston, VA: Author.

Target population: Middle school children.

Summary

This statement by the National Association of Secondary School Principal's (NASSP) Council on Middle Level Education examines 12 dimensions of schooling necessary for excellence at the middle level. The statement's central themes include:

- organizing schooling around children's needs
- preparing teachers to work with middle school age children
- creating focused and rewarding environments both for children and adults
- connecting middle schools to elementary and high schools, as well as to the community.

Recommendations

The Council presented recommendations in the areas of:

- core values. Articulate and disseminate a set of core values to guide individual and institutional policies and practices. These should include respect for diversity, commitment to learning and intellectual activity, and individual responsibility for personal behavior and the welfare of the school community.
- culture and climate. Promote a school climate that supports excellence and achievement. For example, reward academic performance, focus teacher attention and evaluation on students' abilities and difficulties, and create a caring and supportive atmosphere for all students.
- student development. Foster attributes and behaviors which better prepare students to succeed in school and adjust to adult life. For example, this could be achieved through student advisement programs and opportunities for students to exercise responsibility and to explore their aptitudes, interests, and special talents.
- curriculum. Define curriculum broadly so as not to inhibit teachers from exercising their professional judgment. Curriculum should be organized to allow students to connect the materials and skills learned in different classes. Curriculum should challenge each student realistically and be developmentally appropriate. Curriculum at the middle level should teach higher order thinking and social skills.

- learning and instruction. For example, use a variety of instructional approaches; pace activities to accommodate different students; plan cooperative rather than competitive learning activities; extend interactions between teacher and students; adapt material from textbooks and other sources.

- school organization. Organize the school to maximize teacher and student control over the quality of the learning environment and minimize the effects of large size. Include parents in making important decisions about goals, budget priorities, and school climate.

- technology. Educate students to use technology competently and thoughtfully. Consensually develop plans for the use of technology and its integration into the regular curriculum.

- teachers. Require special preparation and certification for teachers and take measures to encourage good teachers to remain in the profession.

- transition. Create a transition panel of teachers and parents to integrate elementary, middle, and high school programs.

- principals. Support principals in order to have strong leadership, e.g., provide strong preparation programs; authorize principals to control their own budgets, staffing, and physical plant; and assign assistant principals for each group of 300 students.

- connections. Develop good relations with local communities and news media. Adjust school practices to family schedules.

- client centeredness. Equip all school personnel to use a developmentally appropriate approach.

20. National Association of State Boards of Education. (1988). Right from the start: The report of NASBE task force on early childhood education. Washington, DC: Author.

Target Population: All children ages 4-8.

Summary

The report of the National Association of State Boards of Education's (NASBE) Task Force on Early Childhood Education provides a new policy agenda to promote the development of all young children ages 4-8. The task force brought together state and local school officials and early childhood education experts, and state policymakers. They were briefed by leading experts; reviewed position statements and papers on key issues; conducted regional hearings; and listened to state legislators, school principals and superintendents, teachers, child care center directors, teacher trainers, and parents.

The task force claims that the reforms that followed the publication of A Nation At Risk (1983) present generic analyses and prescriptions, while the needs of children ages 4 to 8 deserve a different focus and approach. The report suggests strategies for developing a new vision for early childhood education that combines a restructured approach to schooling for 4 to 8 year olds with a call for new partnerships among schools, parents, and other early childhood programs to serve young children and their families.

Recommendations

The following are the two key recommendations and their program components.

- Establish early childhood units in elementary schools to serve children ages 4 to 8 and use these units as a focal point for enhanced services to preschool children and their parents. Program components include:

  -- developmentally appropriate curriculum
  -- improved assessment
  -- responsiveness to cultural and linguistic diversity
  -- partnerships with parents
  -- training and support for staff and administrators.

- Build partnerships between public schools and other early childhood programs in three key areas:

  -- expand and improve child care services
  -- improve staff quality of early childhood programs
  -- ensure comprehensive services to children and families through collaborative relationship among schools and the various community agencies.

A final recommendation urges state policymakers to support and promote the above recommendations by using all the resources available to them.

21. National Black Child Development Institute, Inc. (1987). Safeguards: Guidelines for establishing programs for four-year olds in the public schools. Washington, DC: Author.

Target population: Four-year-old preschool programs for at-risk Black children.

Summary

The National Black Child Development Institute, Inc. (NBCDI) (see organizational description above) has prepared this brochure to set forth ten safeguards or suggestions to ensure that early education programs in the public schools create a learning environment for Black children that is productive, effective and long lasting in positive outcomes.

Recommendations

The ten safeguards are listed below.

- Public school-based programs for Black, preschool-age children should incorporate effective parent education programs.
- Public school-based early childhood programs should involve parents in the decisions about curriculum and policy.
- The staff of early childhood education programs should include teachers who come from the community served by the program and who are racially and ethnically representative of the children served.
- Teachers in public school-based programs should be required to have specific training in preschool education and/or ongoing, inservice training provided by qualified staff.
- Curriculum for preschool-age children in the public schools should be culturally sensitive and appropriate to children's age and level of development.
- Public schools that house programs for very young children should meet the same health and safety standards that apply to independent preschools and center-based child care programs.
- Public school-based early childhood programs should participate in federal and state programs which guarantee adequate nutrition to children.
- Administrators of public school-based programs for preschoolers should ensure that children entering the programs have access to appropriate health care.
- In assessing children of preschool age, the administrators of public school-based early childhood programs should not limit their assessment to, nor base their program planning solely on standardized tests.

- Public school-based early childhood programs should be subjected to a regular, external review of community members and early childhood development experts.

22. National Black Child Development Institute, Inc. (1985). Child care in the public schools: Incubator for inequality? Washington, DC: Author.

Target population: Black preschool students.

Summary

National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) was established in 1970 to improve the quality of life for Black children and youth. A national, nonprofit, charitable, and educational organization, NBCDI focuses on the issues of health, education, child welfare, and child care. This report examines what the NBCDI believes are the potentially grave consequences, particularly for Black children, of the trend toward lodging preschool day care in urban public schools. The report is intended to stimulate discussion and debate, thus it poses the following questions.

- Are existing public school-based programs serving the Black family adequately fostering Black children's growth and development?
- Can public school-based early childhood programs be molded to meet Black children's needs?
- Can public school-based child care models be developed that will not maintain the discriminatory tradition of our public schools?
- Can the momentum toward public school-based child care be slowed long enough to allow a much needed and long overdue analysis of the record and the implications of continuing this experiment?

The report urges that analysis begin, and recommends that Congress, child care advocates, Black elected officials, educators, parents, and community leaders explore these issues.

23. National Foundation for the Improvement of Education. (1986). A blueprint for success: Operation rescue. Washington, D.C.: Author.

Target population: School age children.

Summary

This document presents seven principles deemed essential for planning and implementing a successful dropout prevention program. The principles -- all stressing the need for collaboration and visionary leadership -- were distilled by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education from testimony by former dropouts, parents, local and state school personnel, representatives of various government agencies, business leaders, and others. Under the auspices of National Education Association (NEA) affiliates in Bridgeport (CN), Denver, Los Angeles, and Louisville, these witnesses described widely varying dropout prevention programs, barriers to success and strategies to overcome them, and lessons from experience that might assist in the development of new programs. The monograph includes brief descriptions of the 19 programs about which witnesses provided testimony. Operation Rescue, NEA's grants program to stimulate collaboration for dropout prevention efforts in individual schools, is also described.

Recommendations:

The report's principles for planning dropout prevention programs are:

- clearly articulated vision. Committed, creative leadership is needed that enables belief in the impossible, the taking of risks, the chancing of failure, the unrelenting persistence to begin again and keep trying with different approaches until success is achieved.

- human-centered base. Successful dropout prevention programs value individuals -- children and adults -- and relationships. This involves teachers' cultivation of one-on-one relationships with students, knowledge of and respect for students' culture and background, linkages between home and school, and the school and community as caring and supportive entities.

- collaboration. Collaboration among all segments of the school and community is required to provide total and comprehensive services to the total person. But collaboration also requires special qualities in the parties involved as well as thorough preparation and strategic thinking.

- student-centered education. Components include interventions in the early years; various approaches to identifying at-risk students; encouragement of individual development; personalized programs, curricula, instruction, and support services; and attention to students' transitions between levels, programs, or schools.

- school-site management. While the classroom is the focal point for effective dropout prevention programs, support from the school is

needed. This support depends on participatory decisionmaking, local building management, and possible restructuring of school finances, organization, and administration.

- training. Training must involve all the people in the school and community who relate to students at risk. They need training to enhance their skills for designing effective student programs as well as for working effectively with each other.

- empowerment. A sense of ownership over their dropout prevention program will empower adults and students. This ownership is created when values and skills are matched with needs and services.

24. National Governors' Association. (1989). America in transition: The international frontier -- Report of the Task Force on Children. Washington, DC: Author.

Target population: Prenatal through high school with emphasis on children up to age 5 and on young adolescents)

Summary

This report is one of six in progress under the leadership of the National Governors' Association (NGA), on topics considered to be critical to this country's well being (e.g., emerging international markets, global understanding, competitiveness in our domestic markets). A task force of governors is studying each of these topics, listening to experts in the field, and preparing a document that presents their recommendations. This document addresses the issue of how to ensure that this country has a healthy and vital human resource base. The solution the governors offer is based upon the development of a system of child care and education that is both comprehensive and preventive. They see states as being especially well positioned to raise the prevention banner, and in partnership with families, provider groups, and concerned citizens, to develop a long-term, comprehensive approach to child development. However, the report notes that states first will have to overcome two major problems. One is the disjointed, piecemeal, and crisis-oriented nature of many state services to children. The other is the lack of a coherent national policy on children and families which the task force claims has resulted in a convoluted and restrictive funding stream for children's programs.

Recommendations

The report recommends that states should:

- focus public attention and government resources on high priority prevention programs
- improve the efficiency of current prevention programs through better planning, coordination, and consolidation.

The report recommends that there are several key strategic points in every child's life at which prevention is especially critical. The recommendations are organized around these strategic times and urge states to:

- reduce infant mortality and health problems associated with low-birthweight babies through a program of comprehensive and timely prenatal care
- reduce the incidence of chronic illnesses and preventable disabilities through an expanded program of well-child care
- reduce adolescent health problems through primary health care and health education

- reduce delinquency, substance abuse, truancy, and related problems through community activities designed constructively to engage teenagers.

The recommendations suggest specific programmatic interventions that are especially relevant to the concerns of early childhood educators. These include:

- establish a system to track high-risk infants from birth, so that case managers can effectively steer them into appropriate services
- provide accessible and affordable child care
- require the expansion of half-day preschool programs that are coordinated with child care programs for a percentage of "at risk" four year olds
- encourage the use of a parent/outside service coordinator to establish and maintain an outreach program for parents, identify and facilitate the use of support services, and serve as liaison and advocate for at-risk students and their families.

The recommendations suggest specific programmatic interventions that are especially relevant to the concerns of middle and high school educators. These include:

- reorganize large middle schools into smaller, more manageable units, so that young people can gain independence while remaining in a more personal environment
- create health clinics for young adults that are school-based or located near schools
- encourage schools to create youth service programs as part of the curricula.

NGA is currently seeking funds to provide a three-year follow-up to the task force report. It would include the provision of technical assistance to states and the compilation of an annual statistical report on children's well-being.

25. National Governors' Association. (1987-88). Results in education (1987 and 1988). Washington, D.C.: Author.

Target population: Four-year olds through high school who are at-risk, troubled or not meeting basic standards.

Summary

In 1986, the National Governors' Association (NGA) issued Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education, which describes a five-year plan for improving education. That plan issued challenges in seven areas that included teaching, school leadership and management, parental involvement, at-risk children and youth, technology, school facilities, and colleges and universities. Results in Education (1987 and 1988) are the first two progress reports on NGA's five-year plan. They both highlight state initiatives in each of the above listed areas. The 1988 report also describes state efforts to track the results of earlier education reforms and summarizes what has been learned. The data for these publications were gathered from governors' offices as well as from surveys of state education policies conducted by NGA and other organizations.

Both reports stress how states differ in socioeconomic and fiscal conditions, economic systems, educational governance structures, traditions of state or local control, and historic patterns of investment in education. These differences are reflected in the focus, timing, and breadth of each state's initiatives.

Recommendations

The reports recommend approaches that specifically address issues related to the young child. These include:

- establish interagency coordination of services to young children at-risk
- provide early childhood education, especially for at-risk or handicapped children from birth to four years old
- create systems that identify the academic progress of at-risk students.

The reports also urge state policymakers to consider the following recommendations for middle and high school at-risk youth:

- provide remediation or alternative educational environments
- restructure to serve the growing diversity of students and to expand the role of schools to prevent students from dropping out
- develop suitable approaches and tools for evaluating programs

- encourage interagency coordination of services
- provide awareness campaigns
- develop adequate funding
- support teacher training.

26. National Governors' Association Center for Policy Research and Analysis. (1986). Time for results: The governors' 1991 report on education. Washington, DC: Author.

Target population: Preschool through 12th grade.

Summary

In 1985, the nation's governors, considered seven "tough" questions about education that they felt needed to be answered for schools to improve. They formed themselves into task forces to address their questions about teaching, leadership and management, parent involvement and choice, technology, school facilities, college quality, and readiness. The Task Force on Readiness addressed the question pertaining to at-risk children: "Aren't there ways to help poor children with weak preparation succeed in school?" This task force was composed of eight governors (from South Carolina, Chair, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Vermont, Virgin Islands, and Washington). The task force held three hearings around the country in 1985-86, during which school officials, teachers, program directors, advocates, and scholars testified. The report describes the extent of the problems addressed and includes each task force's recommendations for action.

Recommendations

Initiatives to help at-risk young children become ready for school and experience early success should:

- provide in-home assistance for first-time, low income parents of high risk infants
- develop outreach initiatives using community and religious organizations to assist and support young children with absentee parent(s) or guardian(s) as their sole source of nurturance
- provide high quality early childhood programs for all four-year-old at-risk children and, where feasible, three-year-olds
- provide all parents of preschool children with information on successful parenting practices
- stress continued improvement of developmentally appropriate programs in existing day care centers for preschool children through center accreditation, teacher credentialing, and staff development
- develop state and local structures through which various public and private agencies can work together to provide appropriate programs for young children and new parents.
- develop incentives or direct state aid to encourage reduced class size in kindergarten and lower grades.

To reduce the risk of failure for at-risk students, states must work to assure that at-risk children and youth meet the new educational

standards from school entry through graduation. Possible initiatives include:

- providing extra help in the basic skills for students who have major deficiencies
- developing incentives, technical assistance, and training for teachers and principals to employ effective school and classroom procedures
- assuring a challenging curriculum for all children
- providing for accurate assessment of student performance
- rewarding schools for making progress in educating all children
- establishing home/school programs so parents can assist teachers
- establishing alternative programs to work with potential and actual high school dropouts
- establishing a mechanism for state intervention into school districts when progress is not being made with low-achieving students.

27. The OERI Urban Superintendents' Network. (1987). Dealing with dropouts: The urban superintendents' call to action. Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

Target Audience: Preschool through grade 12.

Summary

Under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), the Urban Superintendents Network, representing 32 major urban public school districts, meet two or three times annually with OERI staff, education researchers, and practitioners to discuss issues of importance to them. In 1986-87, the dropout problem headed their list of concerns. The superintendents felt that the experience and knowledge they had exchanged with each other over the years on this problem might also benefit others -- educators, policymakers, business leaders, parents, and citizens -- currently grappling with the dropout problem. The booklet they produced is divided into two parts. Part 1 discusses the dropout problem, and presents the superintendents' action plan for a joint effort to keep more students in school until graduation. Part 2 describes six strategies they believe hold promise for keeping at-risk students in school. Those six strategies are:

- intervene early
- create a positive school climate
- set high expectations
- select and develop strong teachers
- provide a broad range of instructional programs
- initiate collaborative efforts.

Each of the strategies is defined and examples of promising practices support each recommendation.

Recommendations

Specific recommendations pertaining to the early intervention strategy are listed below:

- The earlier one intervenes, preferably in the preschool years and with the involvement of parents, the greater the dividends.
- Early intervention can have long-term effects on disadvantaged children by decreasing their need for special programs and lowering delinquency, pregnancy, and dropout rates.
- Educators must monitor the academic and social progress of children carefully and early -- and provide special help before years of

academic failure have eroded youngsters' self-esteem and left them behind in school.

- Helping children develop competence and confidence in their ability to learn is a good way to instill a desire to learn and to prepare for a lifetime of learning.

Recommendations relating to the middle learning years include the following:

- early intervention. Monitor academic and social progress to assure that students receive suitable special services throughout their years in school.

- positive school climate. Elements contributing to positive school climate include strong principals, stable staff, school-wide goals, high expectations, a challenging and appropriate curriculum, recognition of academic success, sufficient time for students to learn, small and orderly classes, personal attention to students, consistent application of discipline policies, parent involvement, and shared decisionmaking.

- high expectations. Enforce appropriate standards for attendance, academic achievement, and student behavior.

- strong teachers. Select and develop strong teachers by insisting on top-quality preparation programs, sound hiring procedures, regular inservice, autonomy and adequate resources for teachers, and replacement of unable teachers.

- instructional programs. Provide a broad range of programs that attack the dropout problem on several fronts simultaneously. Examples of program types include: magnet and alternative schools, programs for non-English speakers, compensatory education, and work experience.

- collaborative efforts. Forge partnerships and foster collaboration among various groups. For example, establish school, community, and business partnerships; provide comprehensive support services to pregnant teens, including school-based child care; and embark on media campaigns.

Recommendations pertaining to the high school years include the following strategies.

- Intervene early. Students' need for services can be detected through consistent monitoring of students' academic and social progress.

- Create a positive school climate. Contributing elements include strong principals, stable staff, school-wide goals, high expectations, a challenging and appropriate curriculum, recognition of academic success, sufficient time for students to learn, small and

orderly classes, personal attention to students, consistent application of discipline policies, parent involvement, and shared decisionmaking.

- Set high expectations. High expectations are conveyed through enforcement of appropriate standards for attendance, academic achievement, and student behavior.

- Select and develop strong teachers. This can be assured through insistence on top-quality preparation programs, use of sound hiring procedures, provision of regular inservice, autonomy and adequate resources for teachers, and replacement of unable teachers.

- Provide a broad range of instructional programs. Use of multiple programs will attack the dropout problem on several fronts simultaneously. Such programs may include: magnet and alternative schools, programs for non-English speakers, compensatory education, and work experience.

- Initiate collaborative efforts. Forge partnerships and foster collaboration among various groups. Examples include establishing school, community, and business partnerships; providing comprehensive support services to pregnant teens and teenage parents, including school-based child care; and conduct media campaigns.

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